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THINGS TO COME

REV. C. BOWEN

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“THINGS TO COME,”

PRACTICALLY INQUIRED INTO.

- I. THE KINGDOM OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.**
- II. THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST, AND THE FIRST RESURRECTION.**
- III. THE GENERAL RESURRECTION, AND LAST JUDGMENT.**



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P R E F A C E .

THE following Lectures were written solely for the benefit of my own congregation at St. Mary's, Southwark; to whom they were delivered during the Advent season of last year. To the request that they should be printed, urged by many who heard them on that occasion, I declined to accede. Since then, however, the remarkable events of the present year have apparently awakened more general attention to the subjects here treated of. Finding a considerably increased interest to prevail amongst those connected with my own ministry in respect of the advent of our Lord, I am induced to place these pages in

the publisher's hands; committing them for a blessing to Him whose name they were intended to glorify, and whose cause, it is my humble prayer, they may in some measure tend to promote.

BLACKHEATH,

December, 1848.

LECTURE I.
THE KINGDOM OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

EZEKIEL XXI. 27.

“ I WILL OVERTURN, OVERTURN, OVERTURN
IT: AND IT SHALL BE NO MORE UNTIL HE
COME WHOSE RIGHT IT IS; AND I WILL
GIVE IT HIM.”

It was the promised office of the Holy Ghost, that He should shew to the church of Christ “ things to come.” It was the object of the Divine Revelation to the beloved disciple to make known by him “ things which must be hereafter.” And in conformity with the scriptural example is the teaching of the Church of England, which has devoted a special season to the contemplation of a sub-

ject, the most glorious, animating, and improving, which can well occupy the hearts of men. The Advent of the Son of God is *glorious* to contemplate; for it will not be, as when in the infant weakness of humanity He once bowed himself and came down to suffer. He will come in majesty and power, and “every eye shall see Him.” Then will be “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” It is an *animating* subject,—selected by the Apostle to be the comfort of the afflicted;—chosen by the Lord himself, as being that which may best sustain his people in their short-lived troubles here;—“I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.” It is a subject most highly *conducive to the improvement and the sanctification* of believers; for what motive so tends to keep up a spirit of watchfulness as the habitual waiting for the Lord? or what so leads to purity of heart and walk, as the knowing that “when He shall appear we shall be like Him,” and the having *this hope*, the hope of our lives? But not only to the true Christian,—to the world,—the un-

godly, careless, busy world around us, is the consideration fraught with advantage. For to them it comes, not in the form of hope, but of judgment. It reveals a day of wrath to the sinner. It sounds-before that trumpet-note of no uncertain sound, "Prepare to meet thy God." It sends both saints and sinners to their knees; the one to seek for grace and strength; the other to ask for mercy and salvation. And indeed the season itself is well chosen. For while, in one sense, as the beginning of a spiritual year it opens ~~out~~ the prospect of a life begun anew to God, it reminds all of the near termination of the natural year. And as the days and hours now become numbered, and the end approaches with certain advance, how solemnly does it tell, that with the coming of Jesus "the end of all things is at hand. Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."

I. In directing our minds accordingly to this event and its accompaniments, the first thing will be to endeavour to have a clear sense of the great *fact*,—the wonderful truth of the coming and glorious rule of Jesus Christ, as of a reality soon to take place.

It is an event early announced, and frequently predicted in the Scriptures of God. And truly they read their Bibles with no small deficiency of interest and benefit, who do not discern in many of the leading historical, typical, and parabolic narratives, the signs and tokens of the future "day of Christ;" and more especially those of the children of Israel. You have often been reminded that the Jews were a *typical* people;—that their whole history, while literally true in the occurrence of each event, was designed to figure forth, as if in an abiding and living entablature, the glorious Theocracy of God:—when the Redeemer shall be the world's Ruler; and He who, to prepare us to take blessed part in that great consummation, was once crucified in weakness, shall be highly exalted, "King of the whole earth."

We know,—it is no reach of fancy or speculation,—we are told, that the original purpose of Creation was, that a platform should be therein presented for the glory of the God-man, the Lord Christ. "All things were created" not only by him, but "for him." "For thy pleasure they are,

and were created." And so we are told that it was the eternal purpose, "before the foundation of the world,"—"that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." It is no carnal idea to regard this earth as a fair scene for its Creator's glory; for who shall charge imperfection on that which He pronounced very good? And when, in the day of "restitution of all things,"—sin and all its evil consequents shall be rooted out, which now mar and disfigure His work, shall not a redeemed world be fitted for its Redeemer's praise?

We know, also, how the Creator's work was spoiled:—how the Tempter came; and man became a rebel against his God, and in that rebellion persists to this day,—save as grace subdues the enmity, and kindles anew the love of a Saviour. Infinite Wisdom permitted the breach, and suffered the Evil One to usurp the dominion and exhibit his power over the beings he had seduced. But Jehovah only hid himself, as it were, for a season. Meanwhile He wrote imperfection

on every work and labour of man; and in the sentence of death which He pronounced upon man's existence in rebellion, He left the token of the instability of Satan's rule, and the pledge and assurance of His own future assumption of power. Moreover, to the claim of the Son of God as Creator, He has yet added another, and still more glorious claim, namely, that of Redeemer. His exaltation were not complete in the overthrow of the Wicked One, unless He could spoil his goods, and take from him those in whose subjection he had trusted. And so Jesus took their form, and bare their sin, and died their death. And now He calls them His own,—the purchase of His blood. He pleads for them. He watches over them. He sends his Holy Spirit to sanctify and seal them. And in the day of "the redemption of the purchased possession" He will raise them up, and bring them with Him to be the assessors of His righteousness,—the witnesses of His glory,—the joint heirs of His eternal inheritance.

Now this is the truth that I would have you continually realize,—that in regarding all

that meets your eyes,—the dominion, and the glory, and the greatness, you recognize these two things,—that “the right” is Christ’s, and that the day is coming when God the Father “will give it Him.” How significantly was this foreshewn in the striking occurrence which the Gospel for this day, (Matt. xxi. 1,) has presented to our remembrance;—when the word of the prophet Zechariah had a yet fuller developement;—“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem;—behold thy King cometh unto thee,”—the Just One and the Saviour,—not indeed as He shall yet come,—but “lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.”

It was wonderful how that city and its inhabitants, which in four days after were about to follow the Sufferer with blasphemy and bitter contempt, and in word and in deed to “crucify Him;”—how, I say, the purpose of God bent their minds for the moment to take part in the prophetic pageant;—and the whole city was moved;—and the multitudes humbled themselves at His feet; the beast lowered his neck; and the tree bowed its

leaf; and the very stones seemed ready to join in the glad chorus, "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

But a more general and intelligible expression of the coming dominion of the Messiah had been given in the sudden elevation of a poor shepherd in a small and comparatively obscure nation, to an extreme of greatness and glory to which the world's history has afforded no parallel. And if the struggles of David until his throne was confirmed in his successor, was significant of the trials and militant condition of Jesus and his people on their way to the kingdom;—the reign of Solomon was one of typical *perfection*. Like as report to the queen of Sheba, it tells not of the half: but the glimpse we have therein is beautiful. Wisdom, power, wealth, peace, righteousness—all flourished. Read the 72nd Psalm. Regarded with measure and in degree, you have in it the unaccountable glory of a sovereign, who, in one short reign, extended his government from sea to sea, even "to the ends of the earth." But viewed in the light of spiritual revelation, it

points to One, whose "name shall endure for ever;"—whose "name shall be continued as long as the sun," and whom "all nations shall call blessed." It is the kingdom of Messiah Jesus that is therein foreshewn: "the God of the whole earth shall He be called."

Oh, that will be a happy and a glorious time, when the curse shall be removed, and the blessing of the Lord shall again descend upon a regenerated earth: when none shall hurt or harm: when the gladness of universal creation shall *only* be exceeded by the blessedness of the risen saints, who shall "see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads." Surely this hope may well solace them amid every present earthly discomfort. Here, on all sides, they may have to contend with evil, and struggle amidst a world all-going-wrong in sin and repeated disappointment. But this promise of the text may be the light that cheers their darkness,—“He shall come, whose right it is, and I will give it Him.”

II. There is another important consideration brought forward in the earlier part of this scripture which must now be noticed:—"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it

shall be no more,"—or, it *shall* not *be*, or *abide*,—"until He come," &c. Since the hour of Satan's first insinuating approach to our parent Adam, he has ever whispered to man the tempting word, which he tried in vain with Jesus. Shewing him the world and its glories he has said, "All this will *I* give thee." And thus it has been the incessant aim of human ambition to exalt dominion, and to establish power. Kingdom after kingdom has put forth its strength,—has striven to wield the sceptre of God,—and fallen. It was so, (such is man's weakness and perversion,) in the case of that very people, who had been taught to own and feel the benefit of Jehovah's government. They shook off His easy yoke. They preferred the ways of other nations; and their kings forsook the Lord, to reign by their own might, and to defend themselves by their own arms, or their own policies. And miserable policy it was. The successors of Solomon despised every warning that God gave them. His prophets they slew. His word they renounced. They flew to other kings beside Him for alliance. They made treaties, and they took oaths.

Indeed the oath which the last king, Zedekiah, swore, pledging himself to the king of Babylon in the name of the true God, and which oath he brake,—(thus contemning the Lord before the heathen,)—this was the climax of Jewish perverseness. The prophet Ezekiel is sent with the sentence of the most High. First in chapter xvii. 16—18. “As I live, saith the Lord God, surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake,—he shall die.—Seeing he hath despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when lo, he had given his hand—he shall not escape.” And again, in the chapter before us, the same prophet rebukes the vain endeavour to reestablish his independence, and addresses the wretched king, “And thou profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem and take off the crown. It shall not be.”—As if he would say, “Useless are all such attempts to hold up what God hath forsaken. You may try to renew your strength, and restore your kingdom; but I will continue to ‘overturn, over-

turn, overturn it, until He come, whose right it is; and I will give it Him.’”

It is possible that the repetition of the word “overturn,” may point to a threefold discomfiture of Jewish dynasties,—*then* in the captivity of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar;—*afterwards* in the early gospel days, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans;—and, it may be, to some *yet to be accomplished* defeat of purpose in the day of Israel’s return to their own land. Or in general, it may be taken as the continued resolve of the Almighty to persevere in disappointing *all* Judah’s hopes of greatness and power until the coming and dominion of her only rightful King.

But, in truth, the sentence must not be restricted to the Jew. Like other passages of Scripture, it applies to every nation and people who rely on their own wisdom and strength;—who follow their own devices, and seek their own glory. For what has been the story of human pride and passions, but of once populous lands like Syria, becoming waste;—and splendid cities like Palmyra, becoming ruins; or like Great Babylon,

now described as “heaps and pools of water?” Men’s endeavours, with ceaseless labour and vexation of spirit, have been, from Babel’s days until now, to build their towering strength to heaven and get them a name: while still of every such attempt it has been written, “I will overturn it.” The several dynasties of the world’s Great and Mighty shew but the flux and reflux of the tide of power,—the varying schemes of men’s wisdom and wickedness,—“exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high.” One while we see the mighty fallen, as in the case of powerful Rome; then the little one becomes a thousand, as in our own boasted instance. For a while,—as long as righteousness prevails, and the fear of God is in the ascendant,—the earthly monarch shews out the divine authority; and God makes him prosper. But when that principle decays, and iniquity prevails;—when the love of many grows cold, and habits and maxims are admitted substituting *human* rights,—so often God speaks and acts, “I will overturn it. It shall not be; till He come.”

How slow are we to perceive that the history of our world at this present day is but a part

and continuance of the long-told history of bygone years! What warrant have *we* of exemption from the Divine treatment which others have experienced before *us*, who have thrown off God? And shall we be delivered? We may parade our forces;—we may boast of our constitution;—we may exert our growing powers of intellect and knowledge; but once that “Ichabod” is written on it, and the glory of God is departed from the land, there is no continuance to be looked for. We may go on to speculate, and to devise great expectations;—kingdoms may be confirmed;—wealth may be amassed;—families may be ennobled;—schemes may be accomplished;—the son may step into the father’s place;—one after another may renew the fruitless labour.—What saith the Lord? “I will overturn, overturn, overturn it,—till He come,” &c.

III. But we should take but a partial view of this passage, and of the subject it opens, were we to neglect the spiritual lesson it is designed likewise to enforce. He that would have comfort in anticipating the reign of Christ in His coming glory, must see that

Christ have already the unrestricted dominion of his own heart. How shall we speak with satisfaction of His *universal sway*, if we do not endeavour to set his Word before *ourselves*, and conform to its holy precepts? If the *presence* of Jesus in Spirit with our spirit be not known and enjoyed, what sense can we entertain of the advantage of His *personal coming*? And how can we say that we love His appearing, if we keep back our hearts from Him *now*? It is true that we are but individuals, isolated amid the large extent of the world's enmity to Christ; but to each of us is committed some charge to keep; and to every one of us He says, "Occupy till I come." In fact, we are severally in possession of that which is most precious in His sight. He leaves the great mass of mankind in their pursuits of vanity; but to the child of his own grace He speaks, "My son, give me thine heart." Oh, who is faithful here? Who *has* reserved,—who seeks to reserve his heart for the Lord? Who watches over the current of his own passions and affections with a holy and godly jealousy, lest other lords beside Him should have dominion over him?—lest

some idol have admittance there? It is natural for man to give himself to earthly schemes, and hopes of enjoyment. To the young especially, happiness is almost invariably associated with imaginings of temporal good. With some, it is twined in the bonds of friendship and affection. With others, it reaches forward to intellectual attainments. Scenes of pleasure, pride, or power, figure before the mind. Wealth spreads its gaudy wares; and ambition, and fame, draws each its captives. But who has found the happiness he sought for,—happiness unalloyed, substantial, and abiding?—none. The heart will roam until it find some object upon which to rest. And there are objects allowable and qualified in some measure to gratify and soothe;—(we should otherwise be unsuited for our earthly duties here.) But of every creature dependence on which the heart leans God says, “I will overturn it.” And God speaks this in mercy. Till the heart rest in Christ it finds not its *right owner*. There is a tendency in all our occupations and delights to draw our hearts from Him. His gifts, when sanctified, may be the means

of establishing our faith, and of proving and improving our several graces ; but *this* is not to be the Christian's rest. Verily, *he shall yet have* the happiness he seeks ; nor will his joy be lessened in that day by the absence or loss of aught with which he had been wont to enjoy a oneness in the faith of Jesus. But *until then* he is not at home : he must practise self-denial : he must be exercised in patience : he must learn the lessons of disappointment in the school of affliction. Of every fond dream of earthly delight and satisfaction, which stops short of Jesus, the Lord says, "I will overturn it." The heart shall have no resting place "till He come, whose right it is."

My brethren, the wisdom of the worldling should be, to be prepared against the coming of the Lord. The true happiness of every child of God, will consist in living upon the same "blessed hope." In proportion as our faith realizes the great advent of the Son of God, so shall we habitually cultivate a spirit of readiness,—a weanedness from worldly entanglements,—a rising above earthly cares,—a cleaving to the cross and righteousness of the Saviour, as our title to acceptance in

that day. And while the axe is laid at the root of every other prospect, what a comfort to be assured that *this promise* nothing can “*overturn.*” On the contrary, to every sincere believer, who “waits for the coming” of his Lord, the word of God is, not of *overturning*, but of “*stablishing his heart,*” and “*confirming him to the end,*” and “*preserving him blameless*” unto that day.

May the Lord direct all our hearts “into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.’

LECTURE II.

THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST, AND THE FIRST RESURRECTION.

ACTS I. 11.

“THIS SAME JESUS, WHICH IS TAKEN UP FROM YOU INTO HEAVEN, SHALL SO COME IN LIKE MANNER AS YE HAVE SEEN HIM GO INTO HEAVEN.”

ONE would naturally suppose that a subject like the glorious *advent* of Messiah, so animating to a Christian's hope,—so comforting to the heart in trouble,—and withal so glorious in itself, required little or no apology on the part of a minister of Christ, in taking frequent opportunities of preaching it to his congregation. What was assumed by the

Lord himself and his apostles as an indispensable in *their* teaching, might surely suggest an allowed topic for *ours*. Nevertheless, whether from a fear of opening a way for novelty in speculation; or, as we rather believe, from a want of due apprehension of the reality of the personal promises regarding Christ and his ever-living Church, there seems to be a sort of uncertainty of feeling on the subject, as though the doctrine were to be received with caution. Now to such a notion as this, I cannot by any means assent. The advent of the Lord has, for the greater part of my life, been so associated in my own mind with the perfection of all that is desirable, and its accompanying circumstances and promises have appeared to me to be so wound up among all the other leading doctrines of both Old and New Testament Scripture, that I feel it were a dangerous suppression of truth, and an endeavour in *my* teaching to be wiser than God, did I neglect to direct your minds to this coming fact, especially during the season set forth by our Church for its due consideration and improvement. It is important to bear

in memory, that the *very first word of inspiration*,—*the first revelation* which God sent to man after the removal and ascension of Jesus, was the message commissioned by *two angels*—(so that the testimony of *two witnesses* might confirm it true,)—contained in the passage of the text, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Wonderful as the circumstance was, we may conceive its taking place before our eyes, as though it were an event of to day. We behold the Divine Man,—Him whom we had heard, and followed, and loved, and whom we had seen slain,—clothed in life again,—conversing in the midst of us. Our eyes rest upon his person. His last words have not ceased to vibrate upon the ear,—when we perceive him beginning to rise from the ground and to ascend into the air. We “stedfastly” regard him : It is He himself. We see the lineaments of his well known countenance. We mark in his hands the wounds which He endured. We cease not to look, and to behold the Man, till a cloud enfold

him, and receive him up to glory. As our eyes turn again to earth,—we discern two, in human form, and heavenly raiment, who break the silence which obtained ; and speak in words so plain,—so evidently intelligible that all may hear and understand,—“ Why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? ” As though they would remind us of the danger of *losing the fact in the mystery* ; and would recal us from the imaginative contemplation of unsubstantial and visionary notions of heavenly things, to the real and impressive fact which we can experimentally appreciate,—that as He *went* from earth,—so will He *come* to earth again ;—that as we *saw Him among us*—so *shall we see Him among us* again.

My purpose is to lay before you, some of the occurrences which we have scriptural authority for believing shall yet take place in connection with this great event. As to the exact order of events,—that is a matter upon which each enquirer of God’s word may form his own conclusion. I shall endeavour to state what appears to me most in accordance with the revealed intentions of God ; in the earnest hope and prayer that God may

impress his own truth, and accredit his own instruction to every heart.

I. The first point, on which I would remark, is that which we may call the *individuality* of Him, who is here spoken of. It is essential that we have a clear and definite idea of the person,—yea, the *bodily existence* of Jesus, who is to come. The Almighty knows that we require to have somewhat that will reach to our sensible perceptions, even in what relates to Himself. Hence He has willed to manifest Himself to us in the tangible form of human flesh. Nor was this destroyed by the death of Jesus. The body, which He had, saw no corruption. He took it again. “Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” And this identity of body He still preserves. As *man*, He occupies his place with the Father; as *man*, He liveth and intercedeth for his kindred men whom he has left on earth :—as *man* He will come again in his glory. Let us not lose sight of this fact. Mark how the angel messengers declare it. They not only call him “Jesus,”—that is, by his *man’s name*, in speaking of his return,—but they add,

“*this same* Jesus,”—just as you have seen Him,—just as you have known him;—the identical individual Jesus. So also Peter in Acts ii. 36: “Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made *that same* Jesus, whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ.” Now I would make much of this point. We are apt to subtilize our ideas into such fineness and vagueness in respect of divine truths, that we are soon lost in the abstraction, and retain but little impression of them. Hence we turn to the world, and take up with that which *it* presents as the only tangible reality; and religion, *i. e.*, our relation to God, retains only the place of a sentiment. Nothing will go so far to correct this as dwelling upon the *person of Jesus*. Not to speak of the comfort it gives in the present consciousness of His sympathy and concern in us; with what material influence does it affect us in the view of his second coming. To be able to recognize his identity, in the day He comes to judge the world, will be one of the most blessed privileges of every true believer: while to see *Him* “*whom they have pierced,*” will add unspeakably to the shame

and confusion of all ungodly souls. The reflection of the sameness of Jesus, as when He went on high, gives a distinctness of character to the expectation with which we shall look forward to, and hold ourselves in readiness for "his appearing."

II. The next subject we are called to notice is, the nature of the *coming* which the text reveals. It has long been a favourite theory to resolve all such predictions into the deliverances which the Lord will effect for his people on certain occasions of trouble;—or, on the other hand, the visitations wherewith He from time to time exhibits his power in providential judgments. And so, according to some, the destruction of Jerusalem was the coming of Jesus. But surely it will be enough, for the disproof of such a system of interpretation, to observe, that the advent of Jesus is ever styled the *hope*—the *desire*—the *comfort* of Christians;—and so indicates feelings which could not possibly be entertained in respect of such desolating calamities as that we have now mentioned. But the term used in the text sets this at rest. It is declared not only that the manner of his

advent will be *like* his ascension ; but it also adds the short but expressive word—" so." He will " so come," and, " in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." The word " so " has here much force. In the original it is the repetition, in an adverbial form, of the former expression,—this *same* Jesus. It marks a similarity of nature in the *coming*, to that of the *going away* of the Lord. As the one was *personal*, so must the other be taken to be *personal*. As the one signified *departure*, so the other signifies *return*. As the one denoted *removal* in order to *an entrance into heaven*, so the other conveys the idea of a subsequent *departure out of heaven* in order to *resume his place in relation to earth*. And the same form of expression is used by Christ himself in reference to this event ; as when He said to his disciples, " If I *go*, I will *come* again, and receive you unto myself." However concomitant circumstances may differ, the relative nature of removal and return will be alike. It is that which is presented in the appropriate parable of our Lord—" A certain nobleman *went* into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom,—and to *return*."

III. But there is another particular which must not be omitted in relation to the ideas of "*going*" and "*coming*." They infer the position of those *from whom* He departs, and *to whom* He returns. The expression implies, as numerous other parts of Scripture declare, that there shall be a waiting Church on earth, —represented by this little band of early Christians, who shall be permitted to distinguish the re-opening of the cloud, and the glorious revelation of *Him* whom it had hidden from mortal sight. Therefore the angelic message filled them with delight. The same Evangelist, St. Luke, tells us—that they "returned to *Jerusalem* with great joy." They realized the gracious announcement. And this they did with a distinctness of appropriation *to themselves*. It is true,—but as yet *they* knew not,—time was to grow old, and years pass away before the predicted return should be fulfilled. Those saints that witnessed his ascension, were to be unclothed in death, and to sleep in the dust of the earth. But in the best sense *they, too*, shall have their place in the day of the Lord. "*All* his saints will come with him." And as *He* will preserve

his identity, so shall they. The *same* bodies, but “changed and fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” How beautifully was this expressed by a holy man of God—nearly as long before Christ’s ascension as we *now* live after it,—“I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.”

But we should lose a most solemn and powerful lesson for the world at large, if we were to confine to the people of God the coming of Jesus, and its results. Though received by but few;—though his own fellow-men rejected and crucified him,—He had yet come to “his own.” He had been conversant among them,—reproving and exhorting them. He had suffered at their hands. In his ascension, He went from their power;—He left this world of sinners. To *them*, therefore, He shall again come,—to “make his foes his footstool.” “Every eye shall then

see Him." The infidel shall see Him:—the Sabbath-breaker shall see Him: the profligate shall see Him:—the pleasure-hunter shall see Him;—"and all kindreds of the earth,"—all who have not been separated unto the adoption in Him to a heavenly kindred,— "shall wail because of Him;"—*because of Him!* As the presence of the good and pious is irksome to them *now*, so shall his presence be *then*—with intensity a thousand-fold. It is *his* judgment that will be intolerable. No wrath so grievous as "the wrath of the Lamb!"

IV. Yet though the coming of Jesus will thus have respect to both the godly and the ungodly,—it does not follow that the actual event should be immediately distinguished by both alike. The *time* of the advent is one of those things which the Lord has been pleased to confine to himself. There was not one word to give his disciples an idea otherwise, than that it was *soon* to be looked for. And if his Apostle Paul afterward taught that some delay was to take place,—he gave no reason to conclude that generations were to pass previously away. To the world,—the

unthinking, busy, ungodly world, the coming of Jesus should be sudden;—as a thief, in the night; so that while men should say, “Peace and safety, then sudden destruction should come upon them,” from which there was to be “no escape.” “As a snare” that day “was to come upon all them that dwell upon the earth.” To them consequently it was to come “*without observation.*” To the true Church it was to be with expectation: *i. e.* there was to be a habit of watching and of preparedness;—a looking, and longing for, and hasting unto it. The prayer, “thy kingdom come;”—the heartfelt petition, “come quickly,” was to be the language of their hearts. They were to be sitting loose to earthly entanglements;—temperate,—with loins girded and lights burning,—even as men that await their Master’s return. And all this was to be “*so much the more*” as they should see the day approaching. For they should be permitted to discern the scriptural features and signs of the times: and though still in comparative uncertainty of the moment,—He should be ever present to their thoughts, as “even at the doors.” Now, if

we say that this is the posture in which as believers we should be at this moment,—do we advance an untenable position? Is it *unscriptural*? Nay, is it not the very spirit of our Lord's own injunctions,—increased by the experience of eighteen hundred years, and forced upon us by the aspect of all we see around us?

But there is an objection which outweighs the seeming probability, and involves many pious persons in present unconcern as to the speedy approach of the Lord. They recal the several predictions of events yet to be accomplished by the world in its ungodliness. They see the Jew still a wanderer,—still unrestored to his own land. They see not yet, in its full developement of evil, the great Apostacy;—the confederacy of unbelief and dark superstition against the name of Truth. How then, they ask, can Jesus come? Can He set up his reign of righteousness until all these things be accomplished? Now, brethren, if it were necessary to believe this, we should have, I grant, an obstacle most fatal to that spirit of watchfulness which God's word so enjoins. But it is *not* required to believe

that the people of God should have to await these previous events. *Let nothing take precedence in your minds of the coming of Jesus. Let it be even as at this moment. It may be so.* But how shall we resolve the difficulty? Even thus. There is an order in the arrangements of heaven, as to the appearing and coming of the Son of Man. Every part has its own time. Attend, brethren, while I endeavour to point this *order* out.

V. The trumpet shall sound! No fanciful expression;—that sound as of a trumpet, long and loud, which shall convey *the voice of God* to mouldering dust, and call the dead from their graves. This shall be heard,—by the sleeping children of God;—sleeping in Jesus. And here let me say, I know no authority in Scripture for connecting this *Trumpet-sound* at Christ's coming with the ungodly world of men. I know it is commonly so received; and is used to heighten the picture of terror and dismay. But its purpose is distinctly stated by our Lord, (Matt. xxiv. 31.) *i. e.* for the “gathering together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” St. Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 52. ap-

plies it only to that of which he is treating,—the resurrection of “them that are Christ’s, at his coming.” And again in 1 Thess. iv. 16, wherein he altogether confines it to “the dead in Christ.”—Besides these, I do not know a passage in the New Testament in which the trumpet is used in connection with Christ’s coming. The figurative use of the symbol in the book of Revelation, is quite another thing. What then do we conclude?—that at this sound the *Dead in Christ* shall rise first: and the *Godman* Jesus will bring them with Him at His coming. Even now that summons may have gone forth. Then, *straightway*, in a moment,—in the twinkling of an eye,—*we*, his believing people, who remain alive to that moment, shall be changed;—oh, how changed!—shall be called away from the occupation of the instant; from our sorrows and our cares; from the company in which we are engaged; from the midst, it may be, of the ungodly portion of our families;—“the one shall be taken and the other left.” No sooner do we behold that dark cloud burst,—and He whom we have only known by faith, shall be seen *as*

when He went, than *we* shall be caught up to meet Him in the air ;—this corruptible shall put on incorruption ;—this poor distracted body of sin shall put on its beautiful garments of light and glory ;—no longer chained down to earth, it shall tread on air ;—no longer in fellowship with mortality, it shall join the blessed company of the saints made perfect ; and be for ever with its Lord. This is the first resurrection,—*at the coming of the Lord*. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in it.” “On such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ ;”—to do perpetual service of praise to Him who “redeemed them by his blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation ;” and “they shall reign with him,” *in his kingdom over the earth*. Verily it will be a glorious change !

But what of them who shall be left ? They who heeded not the Lord in *his* ascent, shall be blind to the ascension of the blessed children of God. The world will take no note. The wonder, if observed, will soon cease to be regarded. The world is fast learning to do without Christianity. Men will return

to their customary employments, if indeed they shall have ever left them. The farm, and the merchandize, and the counting-house ; the agitations of politics, the subtleties of law, and the excitements of dissipation and frivolity,—these, and a variety of other things, will continue to absorb, as they have absorbed. And there will be none to control or advise to better things ;—for the salt of the earth will be gone ;—the light of the world will be clean put out. Iniquity, we may believe, will advance with giant strides, and everywhere abound. Then those remaining events shall occur as predicted. The Jew shall return to his own land in unbelief, and *there* be again a mark for the world's hostility. The Romish Antichrist shall come in remembrance for his final doom. Transgression will have come to the full, and apostate Christendom,—the spurious vine of the earth, shall be cast into “the great winepress of the wrath of God.” *Then* shall be the manifestation of the Lord, as supreme in *His dominion*,—coming to execute judgment on the ungodly. All his saints shall then be with Him.

I have thus desired to shew how that

objection which I have noticed may be removed; and this great truth of Jesus's speedy coming—at *any moment, however near*,—be admitted to exercise its full influence upon each watchful and waiting believer. Mark me, brethren, I do not insist on this order of events. Some of these occurrences may possibly be in advance of Christ's coming. But I know nothing in Scripture to gainsay this view. On the contrary, there is much to enforce it. It is only the considering the return of Jesus to his true followers, and his gathering together to Himself those who have made the covenant with Him by faith in his sacrifice, in order that they may be hid in His presence in the day of his anger against the world;—it is only the regarding *this* as possibly anticipating and preceding, by a short interval of time, the more public exhibition of his coming and kingdom over *all the earth*. This I *repeat*,—that the daily and hourly expectation of His revelation is calculated to have a most wholesome influence upon the mind;—an influence far beyond that which the certainty of death usually produces. The young, the hale, the stout-hearted, put

death from them. Practically it affects us not with fear, till sickness or danger appear. And too often as the cloud passes away, the influence of the fear of death goes too. But the coming of Christ rests upon no such sensible affections. It is wholly independent of all we see around. It is an object for faith; and the believer lays it to heart. *His* constant enquiry may well be—Am I ready?

Are you ready, my brethren?—waiting in readiness? Let the enquiry send every one to his own heart. *There* some may learn to question their religious profession, and to view their ground of hope and confidence with feelings other than satisfaction. But be assured, there must be something practically wrong in the condition of that soul which is not in readiness for the Saviour's immediate return.

It was in order to prepare and *make us ready*, that He came Himself in humiliation to make an offering for us,—the just for the unjust, that the sinner may be accepted of God. *There, in His cross*, He wrought the work of salvation. Thence He carries on a

work of grace in the heart; sanctifying those whom He had thus justified,—and making them “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

Yes, verily;—it is as the solemnities of Christ’s coming are admitted to their full influence, that the soul will estimate the essential value of that preparatory work which the Saviour has perfected for its complete pardon and acceptance. None knows better than he, who habitually looks for his Lord, how utterly unfitted he is by nature and practice for such a stupendous event. But this spiritual perception of his own insufficiency is accompanied by faith, which causes him to fall back with renewed confidence upon the one atoning sacrifice of his Redeemer. To that one refuge his eyes will turn, as ever the Rising Sun of Righteousness sends his beams before, and wakens up with his light the dark and lurking evils of the heart. He realizes anew the sufficiency of Christ, whose “blood cleanseth from all sin.” This is his preparedness.

Or if again it occur to him,—that it is one thing to be freed from the charge of sin,

while it is another thing to be regarded with favour ;—if, while he remembers his past unprofitableness, and considers how many good and pious servants of the Lord have been laborious and self-denying, and seemingly able to present superior claims, he feel as though amidst the thousands of God's saints there can be but little acceptance for such as he ; yet will this very reflection urge his spiritually-instructed soul to draw more unreservedly upon the fulness of his Lord, and to clothe himself in the righteousness of Jesus,—the soul's best and only true wedding garment. This will be his preparation. And this he will declare. He will desire to testify that He has met Christ *already*,—at the foot of His cross : and that *there*, where his burdened soul first found relief, he had been crucified unto the world, and taught in self-denial to renounce all its promises, and to choose with his Lord a heavenly and eternal portion. He will dwell with delightful and increasing anticipations upon the glory about to be revealed : and this again will induce more frequent intercourse and closer communion with Jesus in spiritual retirement. He

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will seek to know Him more personally,—more experimentally; and by steadily removing every besetting evil, and cultivating a livelier habit of watchfulness and prayer, he will make preparation in himself,—and by consequence in his Christian influence upon others,—for that which is, and ought at all times to be, the blessed and transcendent hope of all the faithful Church of Christ,—the being “presented faultless before the throne of his glory with exceeding joy.”

LECTURE III.

THE GENERAL RESURRECTION, AND LAST JUDGMENT.

REV. XX. 12—15.

“AND I SAW THE DEAD, SMALL AND GREAT, STAND BEFORE GOD; AND THE BOOKS WERE OPENED: AND ANOTHER BOOK WAS OPENED, WHICH IS THE BOOK OF LIFE: AND THE DEAD WERE JUDGED OUT OF THOSE THINGS WHICH WERE WRITTEN IN THE BOOKS, ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS. AND THE SEA GAVE UP THE DEAD WHICH WERE IN IT; AND DEATH AND HELL DELIVERED UP THE DEAD WHICH WERE IN THEM: AND THEY WERE JUDGED EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS. AND DEATH AND HELL

WERE CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE. THIS IS THE SECOND DEATH. AND WHO-SOEVER WAS NOT FOUND WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE WAS CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE."

I HAVE already taken occasion to set forward in two points of consideration, that which forms the great expectation of the militant Church of Christ. I shewed, first, the Scriptural and eternal promise of a kingdom to be given to the Son of God as Redeemer; and which is yet to be established over the scene and subjects of Satan's rebellion. Secondly, I proceeded to direct your minds to the circumstances of the return of Jesus; and thereupon spoke of the *identity of the person* of Jesus;—the *manner* of His advent, and the *time* of that advent in reference to his expectant people;—together with that which appeared to my own mind the *probable order* of events from the first resurrection—*i. e.* of his redeemed people, to the establishment of His authority, and the destruction of his enemies. There is one other subject which I desire to place before you, namely, that which

involves the *resurrection of condemnation*, and the *final judgment* of, and the *eternal sentence* to be pronounced upon, the ungodly.

It is a subject too awful to be approached lightly ;—too solemn in the description given in God's Word, to admit of an attempt to embellish it by any means of our own. And though there is a certain obscurity,—a darkness intentionally shrouding up those deep purposes of the Almighty, yet it is a darkness that *may be felt*. Sufficient is made intelligible to impress us with the dread *reality* of a day which is steadily advancing upon all men. And if, in what has been said upon the coming of Christ, we have addressed you *as believers*, and taught you to look with comfort to that "*blessed hope*;"—in treating of this subject we apply ourselves to such as may be now present, of whom we cannot affirm that they "are Christ's." Knowing the terror of the Lord, we would persuade men ; we would entreat with them, in Christ's stead,—as though God did beseech them by us,—that they be reconciled to God through the blood of the Saviour ; lest too late they may prove the bitterness of finding their "harvest passed,

—their summer ended ;”—their space of repentance run out, and themselves “not saved” in that tremendous hour. At the same time I trust there be many here who have *known* the *grace* of the Lord as the preparation against his *judgment*. Oh, may *we*, who do so know God in Christ,—think upon these things, as of well-deserved wrath which He has caused us to escape. And may the reflection so lead us to value the mercy we have received, that it may be the labour of our lives, and the prayer of our hearts that *we* may be instrumental to save others also—as brands from this burning.

I. The first matter for us now to consider, is the particular occasion which is here set forth, and what is the *time* of the event: of this I wish you to have a well-defined idea. The term ‘Judgment,’ of which men usually entertain *but one*, and that a rather vague notion, is really used in Scripture in reference to the coming and kingdom of Christ, in three distinct significations. First, it is intended to express the extended rule and government of the King of Righteousness, in his glorious dominion over all the world;—

a Judgment which shall be without end. Secondly, it applies to the discomfiture and utter ruin of all anti-christian policies and people, on occasion of the establishment of that kingdom, at His expected advent. Thirdly, it denotes the solemn inquisition which the Son of God will hold, after a certain period of his government;—when the last, or general resurrection of the dead shall take place, and the judged ones shall pass away into their final and irremediable condition. And in like manner, the *one* designation of time is applied to each of these,—“the day of the Lord:” in none, however, to be confined to the limits under which we receive the literal expression.

Now it is to the *last*—*i. e.* the Day of the Lord’s final judgment and sentence, that the text conducts us. Whatever may be the exact period or date of this great consummation, we need not suppose of it, as though it were of that sudden and unexpected manner of approach, as of the thief in the night. No. There is nothing to lead us to conclude otherwise than that it will be ushered in with the solemnity and deliberation of a great

assize. We are not to confound that dreadful day with the day of the long-previous appearance of Messiah, and of his sudden visitation of temporal death and judgment on apostate Christendom. We may consider the order of occurrences somewhat after this manner ;—

In the first place,—the rising of the “dead in Christ,” and the immediately consequent calling away of all his people from the earth, in order that, transformed into a glorious body, they may meet their departed Christian friends, and above all, their departed Saviour ; and form the retinue with which the Lord is described as coming, namely, “with all his saints.” These things you will observe, may take place at any moment ;—even at once ;—*even now.*

Then,—the unexpected manifestation of His presence in the midst of an unbelieving world, when sudden destruction shall come upon *them*, who, having known the name of Christ, but yet having lived without Him, are especially the enemies of Christ. As the apostle says—“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ ; *whose end is destruction.*”

Then again,—there will be the setting up and continuation of Christ's mediatorial and supreme dominion; during which his glorified saints shall keep court around Him *above*; while Jerusalem shall be his temple and his throne *below*,—whence living water shall flow out upon the earth; and restored and converted Israel be his effectual missionaries to bring the entire heathen to his feet. Then indeed "the wolf shall lie down with the lamb," and "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." During this season the great adversary the Devil shall be enchained, and sin in bondage, and so will be the duration of the millennium,—that thousand years of which the letter of Scripture speaks so plainly.

After that time, an event shall take place, to be permitted in the all-wise purpose of God. Satan shall be let loose, and the old influence of evil will return upon the hearts of men. For though the world had been in perfect obedience to Christ; yet it by no means follows that there had been spiritual life. Once more shall men rise in rebellion against God, when—after a short contest,

another decisive, but temporal overthrow shall put them all to death, and assert the majesty of the Lord. Satan himself shall be arrested in his career of deception, not to be again fettered and imprisoned as before, but to be delivered into the *eternal* torment of the lake of fire. And then is prepared a great white throne; and *HE* sits upon it, from whose face heaven and earth shall flee away. *This*, now, is the time, and *here* is the place of our text. And oh! what language can add to the terrible expressiveness of the next sentence—"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God!"

II. This world has been well called a vast charnel house. Such are the multitudes—the myriads who from the first day till now have yielded to the law of corruption, that mortal mould covers its surface, and pervades our atmosphere, so that we breathe again the particles of corruption,—the fine dust of former mortality. Imagination fails before so great a thought as these being reunited again in form and animation. But God can count the dust of His creatures. He has only to speak again the word, "Let these be;" and they

are, as they *once were*, living, sentient, reasoning, and awfully responsible beings :—but *not* as they once had been, invested with a permitted ability to give shape and character to their wicked desires. *Then* they had *stood against God*,—now they stand *before Him*. Formerly they had been deceivers and deceived,—now the covering is torn from the face of all people, and they are awake,—dreadfully awake to the hopelessness of their condition. They had lived in pleasure and been wanton. They had toiled and laboured to their hearts' disquietude. They had acquired, but carried nothing with them. They had thrown life away. They had soared to ambition's summit; or dragged out an existence of infamy. They had fed their own passions. With daring impiety they had blasphemed with the infidel and the scorner; or with the many had yielded themselves to the fool's luxury of carelessness and unconcern. But now, “small and great,” rich and poor, one with another, they all stand before God; not to plead,—for there will be *no plea*; not to supplicate,—for there will be *none to pity*; not to express repentance,—for it will be *too*

late : but to have every past action and thought brought forward in evidence to shew how truly they had lived without God,—unsanctified and unholy. Forcibly does the apostle, in addressing the Hebrews, tell us what may well be the condition of the ungodly,—namely, “a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour *God’s* adversaries.”

From this judgment there can be no appeal. *The dead* cannot escape. Vain are the expectations of deluded men, who seek in the grave a repose for a graceless, peaceless, soul. Death *was* powerful, and the grave victorious;—but their power shall then be taken away. The imagery of the text represents these mighty ones personified, while a Greater than they demands the surrender of their captives. “And the sea *gives* up the dead which were in it.” “And Death and Hades,” *i. e.* the lost spirits’ grave, “deliver up the dead which were in them.”

But we must distinguish *the living* from *the dead*. This judgment will be for “*the dead*,” then called to life—the “rest of the dead,” mentioned in the 5th verse. who had *not* been

partakers of the glorious "first resurrection." It is quite true, that as Paul repeatedly declares, "we must *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ." But his judgment had already passed upon his believing people. He had called them to his throne, to sit with Him in glory. What new judgment could they undergo? Who could "lay anything to their charge," since God himself had justified them;—yea, had *glorified* them? Their joint inheritance with Christ for more than one thousand years had pronounced them in God's judgment to be "blessed and holy:" but, for the merit of this blessed condition, they are ever "casting their crowns before the throne," and confessing, "Thou, O Lord"—thou only "art worthy."

III. But we pass to another feature of this dreadful day,—to the *judgment* itself. "The Judgment," said the Prophet Daniel in vision, "—was set, and the books were opened." "And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Let me impress this upon you, Brethren, that the judgment here described is not *upon* the

actions of their past lives, or for the several examination of their works, as though sentence were to be passed on the works *themselves*. These are produced as evidence to prove the absence of the love and fear of God;—dead works to prove *them* to have been dead in sin. It is even as the Lord expressed it.—“Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me.” It is not that a greater or lesser amount of evil may afford a higher probability of acquittal, or the reverse; nay, Brethren; *all sin* is abomination before God; and the least sin, unatoned, will leave the soul guilty in his sight. But all evil works, whether in thought or deed, whether in the commission or the neglect, will appear in that day, and testify to the absence of Christian principles. “Some men’s sins are open”—to the world as well as to God, as though without concealment, “beforehand”—in their front as it were, —“going before them to the judgment.” With other men their evil deeds are secret: their character seems fair, and their profession is admitted by mankind, who cannot discern their hearts. In this case their sins are represented

by the apostle as being concealed behind their backs, they "follow after them" to judgment. But "the day shall declare them." In vain will be the protestation—"When saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" The Eternal and Omniscient One will have but to turn to the record to shew that their works were not wrought in God. Thus the judgment which makes them transgressors will be according to righteousness; and in pronouncing upon them the sentence of their condemnation, "the Judge of all the earth will do right."

IV. The text, moreover, contains that dreadful sentence. Death and Hades, *i. e.* all *those dead*, whom death and the grave had on this last summons yielded at God's command, "were cast into the lake of fire,"—the same place of woe into which the Devil himself had been cast,—that they might be *together with their master and lord*, and with him "be tormented day and night for ever and ever." "This," adds the Scripture, "is the second death:"—not the changing of the body into corruption; but the consigning of the body

into unchanging wretchedness. We may not dwell on a subject of which Revelation speaks but little, but that little how grievous to the mind to conceive. Enough perhaps to say that their doomed condition will be the very reverse of that which is described as the privileged portion of the Lord's redeemed. There shall be no *light* there. Theirs will be a night followed by no morning. The tear of remorse shall never be wiped from their eyes; and their pain, and their sorrow, and their cry of despair shall never pass away.

Now, Brethren, shall we put these things from us? Shall we resolve them into fables? Shall we sit down with the unbelieving scorner, and argue ourselves into contempt of these revealed realities? Nay, we tell the careless sinner,—we tell the unbeliever,—*these are truths*:—yea, “*things which must shortly be done.*” We bid the sceptic reason himself into the denial of the first death; and *then*, when he shall have proved his theory by outliving the prescribed term of man's natural life, we may admit his allegations against the doctrine of the second death. *Till then* we may believe God; and have a wholesome and

reverential fear of His most righteous judgment.

And may we not improve this subject, and apply it to the soul's warning in the case of every individual who hears these words? There is one point in the text which may facilitate our doing so. Mention is made of "another book" being opened,—the Book of Life; and of all being condemned whosoever was not found written therein. Now what may we conclude of that book? Of a certainty, it was the Lamb's book of life—the book of His covenant, wherein was written from the foundation of the world, the names of His elect and chosen people. But it was more than that. The eternal purpose of God had devised means to the end, as well as the end itself. His people were to be elect, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. The book of life contained the *way of life*. It was "*the volume of the book*" in which it was written on the part of Christ, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." I come to lay down my life as the ransom for many. Like the former books which were

opened against the ungodly,—*this* also was a book of evidence. It recorded the passage of each from spiritual death to life. It noted the progress of their faith in their crucified Lord; their patience of hope, their comfort of love. Their sorrows, their tears, were registered in that book, in order that they might have consolation. In that book were all their members written, to the end that no harm should happen to them. And when they talked one with another about the sweet truths of God, and the fear of His name, they were written *in that book of remembrance* before the Lord,—that *they* should be remembered as *His*, in the day when He should make up His jewels. In a word, we may regard the Book of Life as bearing record before the Lord, to the same effect as the Holy Spirit seals within the believer's own heart, not merely the absolute purpose of his salvation,—but that testimony which evidences him as making his calling and election sure. Thus is the believer judged of according to his works, written in the book of the living.

Men and brethren, are *your* names there? We speak not of the decree, but of the

evidence. Have you the consciousness that, as sinners, you have fled to Jesus? Are you by faith in His sacrifice united into His life? Have you turned from dead works to serve the living God? Abiding in Christ, is your fruit unto God? Have you the internal witness of the Spirit—the sanctifying evidence that you are born of God unto eternal life? Then are your names in the book of the Lamb's covenant. None that are *so written there* shall perish in the day of the Lord's great Judgment. On *them* the second death hath no power. But when that solemn scene shall close, and the sentence of the lost be consummated in their eternal removal from before His face; *they* "shall serve him;" and "reign for ever." "THEY SHALL SEE HIS FACE, AND HIS NAME SHALL BE IN THEIR FOREHEADS."

THE END.

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